

Joseph and Jesus: Unearthing Symbolisms within the Bible and the Qur'an

Abdulla Galadari, Higher Colleges of Technology, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Abstract: This study investigates the parallel symbolisms linguistically in the narrations of the stories of Joseph and Jesus in the Bible and the Qur'an, in an attempt to resurrect their inner meanings. It uses a unique method of Scriptural hermeneutics to allow Scriptures to be the sole interpreter of itself. Joseph had been left in a pit (cistern) by his brethren. He was taken out by a caravan and sold for twenty pieces of silver. Jesus was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. In Egypt, Joseph enters the prison, which is described in the Bible also as a pit (cistern). Two others enter the prison with him, the cupbearer and the baker. Jesus is also crucified with two thieves. The cupbearer and the baker have similarities to the Last Supper, as Jesus distributes bread and wine. By interpreting their respective dreams, Joseph tells the cupbearer that he will be restored to his position in three days, while the baker will be crucified. Jesus informs one of the thieves that he will be with him in his kingdom, implying that one of the thieves is saved, while the other is not. In the story of Joseph, the fulfillment of the dreams occurred after three days, which coincided with Pharaoh's birthday. After crucifixion, Jesus enters a pit of grave, which is also described as a prison by Peter in the Bible, and is fulfilled in three days when he is resurrected. Joseph asks the cupbearer to remember him when he returns to Pharaoh, but the cupbearer forgets. One of the thieves asks Jesus to remember him when he returns to his kingdom, and Jesus promises him that they will be together. This study also unlocks the mystery in the relationship between Jews and Samaritans. There are many parallel symbolisms in the narration of both stories within Scriptures that this study attempts to unearth from linguistic and narrative perspectives.

Keywords: Joseph, Jesus, Christ, Scriptures, Comparative Study, Bible, Qur'an, Exegesis, Communion, Eucharist, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Samaritans, Jews, Hermeneutics, Prophecy

Introduction

SOCIETIES ARE DIFFERENT and in different societies, religions started to rise and those religions in their external appearance are different. However, are those religions different fruits of the same field being fed the same water and the same nutrients? Diversity of societies, cultures, and religions are indeed mysterious.

Religious texts use elements of symbolism. This is true even in ancient religions and mythologies. Since religion tries to portray a spiritual worldview, it cannot describe the unknown without using elements of the known, such that people may be able to relate to it and try to understand the true meanings of the symbolisms. This study illustrates the literary style of Scriptures and how they are to be analyzed. The methodology used in this study is unique in analyzing Scriptural hermeneutics. Therefore, it does not rely much on existing literature to try to explain the symbolisms of Scriptures. This method of hermeneutics is adopted such that the literary style of Scriptures would be the sole interpreter of itself. Most interpreters of Scriptures use their beliefs to read Scriptures, instead of discovering Scriptural

truth independent of pre-understanding (Osborne 2006:29). Although many postmodern evangelicals have considered Scriptures to be its sole interpreter, many still restrict themselves to their own predisposed beliefs, even when attempting to interpret Scriptures. In most cases, the passages of Scriptures are taken at face value, and considered the self-interpretation of the Scriptures (McQuilkin and Mullen 1997). Is the face value of the Scriptural passage the interpretation of the passage, or does it have deeper meanings? This study attempts to use each Scriptural passages being interpreted by another, while connecting the dots. This method is similar to putting a jigsaw puzzle together, regardless of how one's predisposed beliefs may conflict with the words of Scriptures.

Although many Scriptural interpreters argue against understanding root meaning of words or semantics (Osborne 2006:84 – 85), this study does not disqualify the usage of such in Scriptural hermeneutics. Due to different cultures and predisposed beliefs, Scriptures are read differently between Jews and Christians, as well as within each faith in different times or locations (Reventlow 1984, Scholder 1990, Hill 1993). Hence, there is preconceived prejudice towards the reading of such literary work. In the modern age, Scriptural interpretation with a feminist background also exists, as it is a method of how each group in society would attempt to understand Scriptures and fit it in their own worldview (Castelli 1995: 225-71). In this paper, it attempts to give way for Scriptures to explain itself. It tries to show not what the reader expects, but what the author expects instead.

The study looks into parallel usage of symbolisms between the stories of Joseph son of Jacob and Jesus son of Joseph. In the Scriptures, Joseph is credited with bringing Israel and his sons to Egypt. The story of Joseph is very inspiring, as it shows how a boy turned rags into riches. The drama of the story is filled with various emotions. In Rumi's Mathnawi, a special emphasis is made in Joseph and Jesus representing realities. In his poem, Rumi provides insights of the redemptive nature of dialogue, when linking Joseph with Jesus (King 2007).

The drama shows how love created hatred and rejection. A dream created hatred even more turning into envy. The envy turned into a murder plot, but reduced to a case of casting out. That case created a lie, and that lie transformed a free boy into a bondsman. Then lust came into the picture. With it, came temptation, and with temptation came rejection. The loop returned as the rejection also created another case of casting out. However, a dream has changed a cast out bondsman from rags into second only to the king. Those riches allowed him to remain incognito and create another lie. Just as he was lured out of his father's house, he created a lie to lure his father's household back to him. The lie was then exposed, exposing with it the original lie. Although anger and revenge was at hand, forgiveness conquered the situation and everyone lived happily ever after.

To the reader, the story is very emotional and creates sympathy at the beginning, but ends with great joy. This is exactly how people like a story to end. It ends with the good always winning, because believing in this creates hope.

Similarly, in the story of Jesus, we also see loving-kindness, which comes with hatred by this world. There also is temptation and rejection. Greed and envy also turns the situation to a murder plot. Forgiveness also mastered the situation, although it appeared evil was winning. The story starts with sympathy, but ends with great joy. As it seems evil has won, the good comes back and conquers the situation, transforming a human being into second to G-d. The chain of emotional events in both stories is very similar, and therefore it must be manifested through symbolism in the writing of Scriptures.

This study compares the stories of Joseph and Jesus using Scriptures from the Torah, Gospel, and Qur'an to understand the parallelism of the events between Joseph and Jesus.

Scriptures are like Joseph. It can be thrown into the pit and sold cheaply [Qur'an 2:41, 3:187, 199, 5:44, 9:9, 25:40] or it can be full of beauty and meanings. Joseph's bones are not just bones, for it needs to be resurrected with meanings and interpretations, which he attributed to belong to G-d, and the Qur'an concurs [Genesis 40:8, 41:16, Qur'an 3:7]. After all, it is the Spirit that interpreted Scriptures to the Ethiopian through Philip [Acts 8:26 – 35]. Therefore, way must be given for Scriptures to interpret itself.

Joseph and Jesus

Fatherly Love

Joseph used to tell his father about the evil things he witnessed his brothers do [Genesis 37:2]. He was loved by his father Jacob, while his brethren envied him and hated him for it [Genesis 37:3 – 4, Qur'an 12:8]. Similarly, Jesus was loved by G-d (Father), but told his brothers that he is hated by the world, because of the evil he witnesses against it [John 7:5 – 7].

Joseph's Dream

Joseph sees a dream, in which he along with his brethren were binding sheaves together. His sheaf arose, while his brothers' bowed before it. They knew it meant that he would reign over them, and hated him for it [Genesis 37:5 – 8]. In another dream, Joseph sees the sun, moon, and eleven stars bow before him, which he has even told his father. His father even rebuked him wondering how it would ever be that Joseph not only rule over his brothers, but also over his own father and mother [Genesis 37:9 – 11, Qur'an 12:4 – 6].

This is similar to Jesus, as G-d commands all the angels to bow before him [Hebrews 1:6]. This is referring to a verse in the Torah that is still found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint, but is abridged in the mainstream Bible [Deuteronomy 32:43]. Nevertheless, even the Qur'an shows that G-d commands the angels that once He creates a human being and breathes into him from His Spirit, they are to bow before him, as it was with Adam and as it was with Jesus, the Spirit of G-d [Qur'an 15:28 – 29, 38:71 – 72].

Seeking the Brothers and Flocks

While Joseph's brethren were tending to the flocks, his father sends him to them to make sure that all is well with his brothers and the flocks. They were expected to be tending the flock in Shechem, which means to rise early, back, or shoulder. Joseph goes to Shechem through the deep valleys of Hebron, which means darkness, ink, and scholar. However, when he reaches Shechem, he does not find his brethren. A man finds him wandering around and asks what he is searching for. As Joseph tells him that he is searching for his brethren, the man responds that he has heard them say they will be tending their flock in Dothan [Genesis 37:12 – 17]. The root of the word Dothan, from the word (*doth*) means religious law and edict. It also means tender grass, as well as two wells.

Similarly, Jesus is commanded by G-d (Father) to seek his brethren and the flocks [John 10:14 – 18]. Hence, Jesus asked his disciples not to enter any of the Samaritan (Shechem)

villages, but instead sent them to gather the lost sheep of Israel (Jacob) [Matthew 10:5 – 6, 15:24]. When he goes to find his brothers, he does not find them where they were expected in Shechem, for they were in “Dothan,” having become teachers of the law and immersed in making religious edicts to the flock of Israel.

Further symbolisms of Shechem and Dothan will be interpreted through its usage from Scriptures later in this study, in connection with the Samaritans.

Murder Plot

When Joseph finds his brethren, they conspire to murder him. However, his brother Rueben wanted to rescue him and bring him back to his father, and so told his brethren not to shed blood, but to instead throw him into a cistern (well), which was dry. They stripped him from his garment, and threw him into the pit. As his brothers were eating bread, a caravan comes and Joseph is sold for twenty shekels of silver. His brothers did that, because Judah said it would be useless to kill him and cover his blood. The Hebrew word for cover is (*kisw*), which is a disambiguation of (*kys*), which means bag or cup. Joseph’s brothers ate bread, but did not drink his blood [Genesis 37:19 – 28, Qur’ān 12:9 – 15]. When Jacob was told that a beast devoured Joseph, he lamented for him and said that to the grave (*Sheol*) he shall lament for him [Genesis 37:35].

Similarly, Jesus was under a murder plot by the teachers of the law (*habar / doth* as in Hebron and Dothan). Before the murder, Jesus gives bread to his disciples to eat and puts wine in a cup for his disciples to drink, symbolizing his blood. Although Joseph’s brothers ate bread, they did not drink the cup of blood, and so Joseph was not slain. With Jesus, his blood was shed, as the blood was in the cup, and drunk. Joseph was sold by Judah for twenty shekels of silver for his flesh, but not his blood. Jesus was sold also by Judas (Judah) for thirty shekels of silver, for both his flesh and blood [Matthew 26:14 – 16]. Just as Joseph was stripped of his robe garment, so was Jesus stripped of his garment at the Cross [John 19:23]. When Jesus was seized, a young man was following him, but as he was caught, he fled from them naked, leaving his garment behind [Mark 14:51 – 52]. This symbolism in the Gospel of Mark is symbolizing Joseph to be that young man, as Joseph was sold for his flesh, but not his blood. It was not the only time that Joseph was stripped from his garment when he was thrown into the pit, for it happened yet another time with the wife of his master, and was the reason for him entering the prison, which is the same word as pit in the Torah [Genesis 39:12, Qur’ān 12:25].

Judah and Joshua

Chapter 38 of Genesis takes a turn from Joseph and talks about Judah and his seed. It is Judah that sold Joseph. Jesus, being the son of David, is the son of Judah. The Gospel of Luke brings his genealogy to Perez son of Judah [Luke 3:33], which Chapter 38 of Genesis ends at his birth. Judah mistakes his daughter-in-law for a prostitute and she conceives from him twins. Judah wanted to kill her, but then found out that it was she whom he had mistaken for a prostitute. As one of the twins was about to be born, his hand comes out and the midwife puts a scarlet thread on his hand to know that it was he who was out first. However, his hand was pulled back inside and instead Perez was the first to break out. Perez means to breach a wall and make a hole. The one with the scarlet thread was called Zerach.

Joshua, whose name is the same as Jesus (Yeshua'), meaning salvation, fought many battles in Canaan. The greatest and most mysterious battle was against Jericho, which means Spirit. Jericho was fortified with walls around it. Joshua sends two spies into the city, just as the twins, Perez and Zerach. The spies take shelter in a brothel with a prostitute, who along with her household, were the only inhabitants of Jericho who survived the massacre, as a reward for helping the Israelites. The prostitute put a scarlet cord from her window to signal to the Israelites of her place. This is to make her known to them, such that they would know who she is and not kill her, similar to the blood that the Israelites were commanded to put on their doors when G-d inflicted the final plague upon Egypt on Passover [Joshua 2:18 – 19]. Joshua surrounded Jericho for seven days and on the seventh day the Israelites cry out aloud and the walls of Jericho are breached (Perez), as the walls tumble down [Joshua 6:20].

Prior to entering Jericho, the Israelites were east of Jericho in Gilgal, which shares the same root word as Golgotha, which means rolling, skull, cycle, and reincarnation, the name of the place Jesus was crucified [Joshua 5:10, Mark 15:22]. While in Gilgal, the Passover feast started. Jesus was even crucified in Golgotha on Passover. Nevertheless, there are many parallel symbolisms in the stories of Joshua and Jesus that is beyond the scope of this study.

Joseph's Trustworthiness

Potiphar, Joseph's master, entrusted unto Joseph everything he owned, and by such, Joseph has become a deputy of his master [Genesis 39:4]. Similarly, Jesus was entrusted by G-d with everything [John 5:19 – 22]. In the Qur'an, the human whom G-d creates from dust and then breathes into him from His Spirit, is considered the Vicegerent of G-d on Earth, in whom it is entrusted [Qur'an 2:30]. As it was with Adam, in the Torah and the Qur'an, so it also is with Jesus [Qur'an 3:59].

The Cupbearer and the Baker

When Joseph was thrown into the pit by his brothers, the Hebrew word used is (*bwr*), meaning well. However, this term does not necessarily mean well, it is a general term for any opening in the ground. When Joseph is thrown into the prison, the Hebrew word used is (*beit shr*), meaning curved house. However, when he leaves prison, the Hebrew word used for prison or more accurately dungeon is also (*bwr*), as a pit in the ground [Genesis 41:14]. In Persian, the name for dungeon is (*siyah chal*), which literally means black pit, where Baha'u'Llah was also imprisoned, and it was also once a reservoir of water, which had become dry (Mazidi 2003).

The king's chief cupbearer and chief baker also enter the prison with Joseph. This symbolizes the Last Supper, when Jesus gives bread and wine to his disciples. Also, as Joseph enters prison with two individuals [Genesis 40:2 – 3], so was Jesus crucified with two thieves [Mark 15:27]. Joseph interprets the cupbearer's dream as that he will be restored back to his position in three days. However, to the baker, he interprets his dream as that he will be crucified [Genesis 40:12 – 13, 18 – 19]. The usage of this symbology is important. Jesus symbolized wine as blood [Matthew 26:28]. In the Torah, blood is life [Leviticus 17:14]. Hence, the cupbearer was to live. Jesus symbolized his flesh as bread [Matthew 26:26]. Bread is broken symbolizing the destruction of the flesh. Hence, the baker was crucified. The Hebrew

Bible uses the word (*lachm*) for bread, which means both bread and flesh (meat). The Qur'an uses the word flesh (*lachm*) many times, but in the story of Joseph uses the word (*khubz*) for bread, which means baked and also destruction that the Qur'an interprets as crucifixion [Qur'an 12:36, 41].

When Jesus symbolizes wine and bread, the same symbology of the cupbearer and the baker is made, but instead of it being fulfilled in two different individuals, it is being fulfilled in one. The wine is blood, which is life, and life is the opposite of death. Therefore, Jesus, as Life, cannot truly die, as the cupbearer. The bread is flesh, which is crucified and destroyed unto death, as the baker. Hence, the Gospels speak of Jesus' crucifixion, which is true, as it is talking about the destruction of his flesh, as the baker. The Qur'an speaks that Jesus was not killed, which is also true, as it is talking about his blood, which is Life that in true reality cannot die, as the cupbearer [Qur'an 4:157]. In the Qur'an, it states that those who think Jesus died are following conjecture. In another verse, it says that those who follow conjecture are eating the flesh (bread) of their dead brother, and so he has been hated [Qur'an 49:12]. Jesus appears in this world to be dead, for he died in the flesh, but in true reality is alive in a different realm, for his kingdom is not of this world. In Jesus' Last Supper, he reminded his disciples and all his followers to always and forever remember that he is both, the cupbearer and the baker; he is not one without the other.

When Jesus releases his spirit unto G-d, his flesh in this world is dead. Yet, in true reality his spirit was raised unto G-d and so Jesus was alive with G-d and not dead [Luke 23:46, Qur'an 4:157 – 158]. When Jesus announces that it has been fulfilled, he releases his spirit, which goes up to G-d. Similarly, the Qur'an states that G-d tells Jesus that he will fulfill him and raise him up to G-d [Qur'an 3:55]. The word for fulfillment, which has its root in the Semitic (*wafa*), means to fulfill and to die. It may be a little confusing in trying to understand what this is trying to portray. Jesus died on earth and his body, which is of earth, died. However, his spirit is the Spirit of G-d, which was raised up to G-d, and so his Spirit, which is heavenly, never died. This is not different how the Apostle Peter describes his epistle that Jesus died in the body, but was alive in the Spirit, and though the people on earth saw him dead in his flesh, he was alive in the Spirit and preached among the prisoners, who were disobedient from the time of Noah [1 Peter 3:18 – 20]. Therefore, Jesus died in the body, but lived in the Spirit. Hence, he appeared to be dead in this world, but alive in a different realm. The Gospels and the Qur'an are not providing different views of the same event (Galadari 2010). The issue in the apparent difference between Christian and Islamic accounts of the Crucifixion is to understand what the subject in question is when talking about death and life, according to their respective Scripture. Is the subject in question discussing the flesh of Jesus, which died, or is it discussing the spirit of Jesus, which is raised to G-d, and therefore never died? In other words, is the subject in question discussing the symbol of bread or wine? Nonetheless, in Jesus, he has fulfilled the roles of both the cupbearer and the baker, which the Gospels do not deny.

Those who partake in the sacrament of the Eucharist must also be both, the cupbearer and the baker. They must crucify themselves to live. They cannot with their mouths say we live, while their egos and selfishness were never crucified for the sake of all others. If they never died, they can never live. If they did not follow Jesus and take the sins of the world upon their shoulder, they are not worthy of him. Those are the hypocrites that Jesus specifically spoke against, for they clean the outside of their cup, while inside, it is full of dirt [Luke 11:39 – 41]. They are neither the cupbearer nor the baker.

The Apostle Paul even gave a similar warning [1 Corinthians 11:23 – 29]. As Paul said, those who are partaking in the Eucharist have proclaimed Jesus' death until he comes back again [1 Corinthians 11:22]. As Paul was teaching that to partake in the Eucharist, the whole gathering must wait for each other in church. The church symbolizes the kingdom of G-d on earth. This teaching symbolizes the gathering of all people and all nations together on earth, before the Eucharist may be fulfilled, as the Qur'an many times prophesies [Qur'an 3:9], even after explaining the eating of flesh of the Eucharist [Qur'an 49:13], for Jesus has been proclaimed dead, by eating his flesh, until his coming to fulfill the prophecy of the Eucharist with blood, not only in himself, but in each individual [1 Corinthians 11:26].

In the Last Supper, Jesus distributed bread symbolizing his flesh before wine symbolizing his blood, for crucifixion, destruction of flesh, and death comes before resurrection and life. It also symbolizes that the Gospel, which emphasizes on crucifixion as the baker, is revealed before the Qur'an, which emphasizes on life as the cupbearer. Nonetheless, both the Gospel and the Qur'an testify both natures of Jesus, as the cupbearer and the baker. Although the Gospel of Luke shows that in the Last Supper, there was the cup, then bread, then the cup again, Jesus did not symbolize the first cup as his blood, but as the produce of the vine [Luke 22:17 – 18]. It may also be understood that a person is initially alive, then dies, then is resurrected into life again.

The cupbearer and baker's dreams were fulfilled after three days, during the king's birthday [Genesis 40:20 – 22]. After Jesus was crucified, he was resurrected (or reborn) in three days. In the story of Joseph, the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker were fulfilled after three days, during the birthday of the king of earth. In the story of Jesus, the fulfillment was after three days, during the birthday of the king of heaven.

Joseph has asked the cupbearer to remember him when he goes back to Pharaoh, so that he may leave the prison, but the cupbearer forgot, and so Joseph remained in prison for two more years [Genesis 40:23, Qur'an 12:42]. One of the thieves asked Jesus to remember him, and Jesus tells him that he shall be remembered [Luke 23:39 – 43]. Although the Gospels do not specify which of the thieves was saved, the one at the right or left of Jesus, it is obvious. Jesus was symbolizing the Throne of G-d, and the one to his right is symbolizing the one saved, being to the right of the Throne.

The parallel symbolisms in the story of Joseph and Jesus' crucifixion do not even stop there. The one who took Jesus' body, wrapped it in linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb, is no other than Joseph of Arimathea [Luke 23:50 – 56]. As Joseph was put in a prison pit, so was Jesus put in a prison pit by Joseph, where he preached among the prisoners, like Joseph did [1 Peter 3:18 – 19, Qur'an 12:37 – 40].

Joseph Entrusted with the Kingdom

After Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams, he was shown favour by the king, who declared him to have the Spirit of G-d. Pharaoh entrusted his own household and the whole kingdom unto Joseph. All the people were to show respect to Joseph, as second in command. Pharaoh was only greater than Joseph by the throne, and by such, Joseph has become as equal to Pharaoh [Genesis 41:38 – 44, 44:18, Qur'an 12:54 – 57, 87]. Similarly, G-d entrusts the whole world unto Jesus, as second in command, for the Spirit of G-d dwells in him, and by such has become as equal to G-d [John 5:16 – 30, Qur'an 15:29]. The word used in the

Qur'an for forming the human being is the Arabic (*sawwaytuhu*), which is interpreted as formed, but its root word (*sawa*) also means equal.

The Famine and the Storehouses of Egypt

As famine ravaged the whole world, there was food in Egypt due to the wisdom of Joseph. He opened the storehouses of Egypt and sold food to the people [Genesis 41:56 – 42:2]. Similarly, Jesus described people as spiritually hungry, and that he is the Bread of Life, for those coming to him will never be hungry again [John 6:26 – 59], as those who came to Joseph.

Joseph Feasts with his Brothers

When Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy food that they may live and not die, he knows them, while they did not recognize him. He accuses them of spying and asks them to bring over their youngest brother, Benjamin, to prove their honesty. He keeps his brother Simeon a prisoner, as insurance that they would come back. Their father Jacob did not like the idea of sending Benjamin with them. Rueben, who had always wanted to save Joseph from his brothers, ensures the safety of Benjamin. However, when Judah, who was responsible for the sale of Joseph, gives a similar insurance, Jacob agrees.

When the brothers return to Joseph, he commands that an animal is slaughtered so that they may dine together at noon, Joseph along with his eleven brothers, similar to the Last Supper when Jesus was with his eleven disciples, as Judas left to betray him. Joseph's brothers were given water to wash their feet, before their feast [Genesis 43:24]. Similarly, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples before their feast [John 13:1 – 17]. As Joseph imprisoned his brother Simeon in the same manner Joseph himself was imprisoned [Genesis 42:24], Jesus told Simon Peter (Simeon) of his death in the same manner that Jesus himself died [John 21:19].

Joseph Delivers the World

When Benjamin is accused of stealing Joseph's cup, the brothers become terrified, for they gave insurance unto their father, and especially Judah, who argued the case of Benjamin before Joseph [Genesis 44:18 – 34]. Although Judah was responsible for the sale of Joseph, he seemed to be repenting of his previous sin by at least saving Benjamin. Nonetheless, Joseph does not take any revenge against his brothers and asks them not to feel guilty for what they have done, for he told them that it was G-d's will and grace that he comes to Egypt ahead of them so that the lives of many on earth may be saved and delivered through him. Hence, Joseph argued that it was not his brothers who sold him, but G-d [Genesis 45:4 – 8].

Similarly, Jesus saved and delivered the lives of many on earth from sin [John 3:16 – 17]. Just as Judah repented from his sin and took responsibility, so did Judas feel remorse, and gave back the thirty pieces of silver [Matthew 27:3 – 5]. Similar to Joseph absolving his brothers from sin, for it was G-d's will and grace, Jesus also argued with Pilate that in reality, he is not responsible for his death, but it was G-d's will and grace [John 19:11]. Even on the cross, he absolved his persecutors from sin [Luke 23:34, Sahih al-Bukhari no. 3241].

Jews and Samaritans

Through Judah's actions, Joseph was thrown into the pit, and therefore Joseph was able to provide salvation to the hungry world. Even the word for Judaism is rooted in Judah. Through Judah's line comes King David and through him, comes Jesus. Even when speaking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus asserts that salvation comes through the Jews. As seen in the symbolisms within Scriptures, Jesus, from the line of Judah, endured similar events that Joseph endured, because of Judah. The troubles between Judah and Joseph manifested itself between Judaism and Samaritans, as Samaria was made an inheritance to the descendants of Joseph [Joshua 24:32].

According to the Samaritans, the holy mountain is Mount Gerizim and not the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Mount Gerizim is in present-day Nablus, which is biblically known as Shechem (Sychar). Shechem is where Israel's sons should have been tending to their flock. When Joseph went there searching for them, he instead finds them in Dothan, which as described earlier, symbolizes how in the time of Jesus, the Jews were busy making religious edicts (*doth*) to the flock of Israel. Hence, the tribe of Joseph was the one who inherited Shechem instead, and from there the Samaritans came to be [John 4:5]. Since Joseph understood how to interpret symbols, he taught his children to be weary of their cousins, and should remain steadfast in Shechem instead of Dothan. Although Jesus did not come from them, never did he condemn them, though they were at a time inhospitable to him [Luke 9:52 – 56]. However, he has condemned the Jewish teachers of the law many times, who instead of Shechem, were tending Israel's flock in Dothan, by being busy making religious edicts (*doth*) to the flock of Israel.

In Shechem, the Israelites renewed their covenant with G-d in the presence of Joshua, who has set a stone, which in Hebrew is (*ibn*), the same root for son, to be their witness [Joshua 24:25 – 27]. Once the covenant had been renewed in Shechem, Joseph's bones were buried there and it became an inheritance to his descendants, whom most of the Samaritans descend from [Joshua 24:32], except for a few who descend from Levi, to partake as priests in their rituals [2 Kings 17:27 – 28]. Shechem was purchased for a hundred pieces of silver, double the amount of sale of Joseph and Jesus combined.

When the Arameans wanted to capture Elisha, he was in Dothan. When they came to Dothan, they were struck with blindness. However, he took them to Samaria, opened their eyes, and did not curse them, but made them a feast [2 Kings 6:13 – 23]. Similarly, Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, who are blind in Dothan, to take them to Samaria and open their eyes.

Since the Samaritans were in Shechem, where Israel's flock were supposed to be grazing instead of Dothan, Jesus said that he was not sent to them, but instead was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, who are in Dothan, for those in Shechem are not lost [Matthew 10:5 – 6]. The ones in Shechem are supposed to be there. Nonetheless, Jesus emphasized to the Samaritan woman that it is neither Shechem nor Jerusalem, for he was trying to remind her that these geographical locations are but symbols of what they truly mean [John 5:21 – 24]. After all, the root of the word Samaria (*smr*) also means to prepare for burial and crucify. It is the same root of the word for nail (*mismar*). Joseph understood their interpretation, but the Samaritans might have forgotten that they are but symbols in need of interpretation. They are just like Manasseh, the firstborn of Joseph, which means forgetful [Genesis 41:51].

Interestingly, according to Muslim traditions, specifically of the Twelvers Shi'a, Imam al-Mahdi, who will come in the end of days along with the Messiah to usher the Messianic Age, is living in Samarra', in present-day Iraq. Samarra' houses the mausoleum of Imam Hasan al-Askari, who is Imam al-Mahdi's father. The point of significance in these traditions is that the root of the name Samarra' and Samaria are exactly the same. According to the traditions, Imam al-Mahdi's mother is also a descendant of the Apostle Peter, whom the Church is built upon. The relationships between Samaria and Samarra' along with the Messiah and al-Mahdi provides resemblance between Christian and Islamic eschatology.

Scriptural Literary Symbolism

The symbolisms used by Scriptures are stunning in how the jigsaw puzzle tries to fit. The Qur'anic literary style is even different than that of the Bible. As the Bible is for the most part appears to be chronological, the Qur'an jumps from story to another even within the same chapter without any necessity for a chronological order. The Qur'an is a sign that the Bible must also be seen in a similar way, just as the symbolisms of Joseph and Jesus are related, although not chronological. Even the order of the symbolisms is not chronological. Judah selling Joseph is towards the beginning of Joseph's story, whereas Judas selling Jesus is towards the end of Jesus' story.

This style is purposeful to ensure that the reader is not mistaking Scriptures as a mere history book with a certain chronology. The Qur'an rejects the notion that it is a history book, for it never was its intention, but that G-d puts veils on people's hearts that though they hear, they do not hear [Qur'an 6:25], for it is a Book that only the pure may touch and understand [Qur'an 56:77 – 80]. This is the same reason Jesus argued that he speaks in parables [Matthew 13:10 – 17].

Ultimately, the jigsaw puzzle of Scriptures being put together to make perfect sense, which the Qur'anic style implies that the Bible should also be read in the same way, is a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy [Isaiah 28:9 – 14]. Isaiah's prophecy was to the pride of Ephraim, which means fertility, the second son of Joseph, and the receiver of the blessing from Jacob [Genesis 48:20]. The Qur'an uses roots of the words Samaria and Nablus making a similar prophecy on such pride, as comparable to Isaiah 28 [Qur'an 23:62 – 90]. Scriptures are described as grain that needs grinding to make bread, such that it is not threshed forever [Isaiah 28:23 – 29]. Now that the bread is about to be baked, the table needs to be prepared to serve the bread and partake in its sacrament, as the whole congregation (nations) comes together, exactly as Paul said it shall be and as the Qur'an promises [1 Corinthians 11:17 – 29, Qur'an 3:9, 5:48, 16:90 – 97]. Is that not the answer to the Lord's Prayer [Matthew 6:9 – 15]?

Now, it is understood that the symbolisms in the narration of the stories of Joseph and Jesus, the son of Joseph, should signify that the literary style of Scriptures is beyond what most people imagine. It was never meant to be a simple history book with a certain chronology that some believers think it is. However, it is meant to have wisdom and uplift souls from one level to another [Isaiah 28:29, Qur'an 3:3 – 4].

References

- Castelli , E. A. et al** (eds.) (1997) *The Postmodern Bible*, by the Bible and Culture Collective, Yale University Press, US.
- Galadari, A.** (2010). "Humanity's Ultimate Sacrifice," *International Journal of the Humanities*, 8(1): 245 – 254.
- Hill, C.** (1993) *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*. Penguin Books, UK.
- King, J. R.** (2007) "Jesus and Joseph in Rumi's Mathnawi," *The Muslim World*, vol. 80, no. 2, p. 81 – 95.
- Mazidi , J.** (2003) *One with all the Earth: An Introduction to the Baha'i Teachings*. Kalimat Press, Los Angeles, CA, p. 4.
- McQuilkin , R. and Mullen, B.** (1997) "The Impact of Postmodern Thinking on Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 69 – 82.
- Osbrone , G. R.** (2006) *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.
- Reventlow , H. G.** (1984) *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*. SCM Press, London, UK.
- Scholder , K.** (1990) *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology: Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century*. SCM Press, London, UK.

About the Author

Dr. Abdulla Galadari

Abdulla Galadari has a PhD in Civil Engineering with two Masters degrees and two Bachelors. Besides his interests in the advancement of science and engineering, he has undertaken a spiritual journey through different religions and human philosophy in search for the Truth, studying Comparative Religion and esotericism. For such, he is currently working on a PhD in Islamic Studies. Human spiritual experiences have changed the course of history tangible to this day and Abdulla looks on how those experiences apply in every day life. His research goes into esoteric symbolism and spiritual meanings of Holy Scriptures, comparing them and drawing parallels between different traditions. He believes that the power of any spiritual research is not through scholarly work alone, but also through experience.